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Honorary IIUM doctorates for Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali were today conferred the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters and Honorary Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in Social Work respectively.

The honours were conferred by the International Islamic University of Malaysia and were presented by IIUM constitutional head, the Sultan of Pahang Sultan Ahmad Shah.

"The Doctor of Letters is the highest honorary degree in IIUM which is to be conferred, for the first time, upon a truly extraordinary human being endowed by God with exceptional qualities. It is in recognition of Dr Mahathir's distinguished contributions as a Muslim writer and intellectual," said IIUM Rector Prof Dr Mohd Kamal Hassan.

He said IIUM decided to focus on Dr Mahathir's role as a writer and political intellectual by reviewing and evaluating his writings, essays, poems, books and collected speeches from 1945 until October 2003.

In his acceptance speech, Dr Mahathir called upon Muslims to reject teachings which deviated from the fundamentals of Islam and denied the pursuit of knowledge, making them ignorant and incapable of benefiting from the bounty of Allah.

Dr Mahathir said that those who study only religion will never fully appreciate the power of Allah and his religion.

"Those who study only Science will become too arrogant to appreciate the meaning and the need for faith and the weakness of mortal man.

"The religious Muslim must study Science adequately and the Muslim scientist must study the fundamentals of the religion of Islam in order to save themselves and the world from the arrogance of the partially knowledgeable or partially arrogant," he said.

In the new world, he said the Muslims with their faith and well rounded knowledge must show the way; The way to a religious and morally upright, materially wealthy and deeply knowledgeable world.

Earlier, in his royal address, the Sultan of Pahang said Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah had travelled a long journey and had worked hard to serve the country.

"They have both brought many positive changes to the lives of many and over the last two decades, Dr Mahathir has clearly proved himself to be the father of modernisation.

"The multi-racial unity in the country is another legacy of Dr Mahathir and I must say that they are indeed truly an extraordinary couple," he said.

Dr Siti Hasmah was conferred the award for her tireless efforts in aiding the disadvantaged, disabled, distressed and dependent.

She has also been instrumental in helping people lessen their chances of being poor, inept, abused, divorced, delinquent or neglected.

IIUM's Professor in Psychology, Prof Noraini Mohd Noor described Dr Siti Hasmah as a doer of jobs and tasks, an agent of change and a producer of services - a fitting description of a great social worker.

In accepting her award, Dr Siti Hasmah said voluntary service in the 21st century is needed more than ever before, to manage areas of priority concern in social, economic, cultural, humanitarian and peace building.

"The realm of social work is vast and it is only when we begin, do we find that the bounds are limitless and the needs and gaps great and

difficult to fill.

"It must be remembered that social work is not as easy as we would like it to be and we must put our hands and minds and most of all our hearts into it. It requires plenty of dedication and at times my social work takes me away from home more often than the Prime Minister himself," she said in jest.